



PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS BOARD

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TO: Joint Education Interim Committee

FROM: Brendan O'Connor, Executive Director

DATE: May 31, 2022

SUBJECT: Virtual Education

Background

At its October 2019 meeting, the Professional Teaching Standards Board (PTSB) heard from the Wyoming Department of Education (WDE) requesting the creation of an endorsement for virtual educators -- those teaching in online settings. The WDE was sponsoring teachers to complete the Quality Matters Teaching Online Certificate program, an 11-week micro-credential program, that would lead to the virtual educator endorsement.

At that meeting the Board approved the creation of the Virtual Educator add-on endorsement, and approved that anyone completing the Quality Matter certificate program, or a PTSB-approved online teaching certificate program, would qualify for earning this endorsement.

The University of Wyoming had a certificate program in this area for a number of years, but until the creation of the endorsement and the approval of its program, completers were not eligible to add the endorsement. The University submitted two programs for approval -- one is a Masters in Learning, Design, and Technology, and the other is a 12-credit hour certificate program. The certificate program is embedded in the Master's program, or can be completed separately. These programs were approved in 2020.

PTSB Chapter 4 Rules outline the standards common to similar programs nationwide, and that both the Quality Matters and University of Wyoming programs meet:

(l) Virtual Educator.

(i) The program shall require knowledge and demonstrated competence in the planning and presentation of instruction in a variety of virtual learning environments and settings covering but not limited to:

- (A) theories and models of instructional design;
- (B) the online learning environment;
- (C) technology and learning management systems; and
- (D) pedagogy of online learning.



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Professional Development (PD)

In 2018 WDE Rules Chapter 41 were established regarding minimum requirements for virtual educators. Chapter 41, Section 7 states:

Any district offering a virtual education program shall require any teacher assigned to teach an active virtual education course to complete, on an annual basis, at least one (1) workshop focused primarily on using virtual education methods to instruct students. Any workshop used to satisfy this minimum requirement shall be at least seven (7) hours or the equivalent. For any virtual education teacher subject to the requirements of 21-7-303(a), the workshop used to satisfy this requirement shall be approved by the Wyoming Professional Teaching Standards Board.

This requirement was first implemented during the 2018-19 school year. Since that time PTSB has tracked these workshop hours, and has designated them as meeting the virtual educator PD requirement.

Recent changes

On May 4, 2022 Governor Gordon approved changes to PTSB Rules Chapter 4 for the Virtual Educator endorsement. These changes were prompted by requests from virtual educators who had been completing the required PD, but had run out of virtual education-specific workshops/training/courses they hadn't already completed. WDE staff concurred with the changes as they were amending their Chapter 41 rules. In summary, the changes for earning the Virtual Educator endorsement are:

1. Educators may add the endorsement by completing a PTSB-approved program (Quality Matters, or UW outlined above); or
2. Educators may add the endorsement by:
 - a. documenting three (3) years of verifiable experience and instruction as a fulltime virtual educator;
 - b. documenting completion of the required PD specific to virtual education of not less than twenty-one (21) contact hours; and
 - c. providing a letter from the employing school district or virtual education vendor attesting to the applicant's employment performance as a virtual educator.

Proposed changes to WDE Rules Chapter 41 allow that any educator holding the Virtual Educator endorsement is not required to annually complete one workshop (7 contact hours) focused on using virtual education methods to instruct students. PTSB will continue to track virtual education PD hours for those not holding the endorsement.

To date there have been five educators earn the Virtual Educator endorsement.